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UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT URGES FACULTY TO RESPECT FREE FLOW OF IDEAS
BOSTON

Harvard University's rules relating to secrecy in research may not be adequate or sufficiently understood by the faculty and should be redrafted, Harvard President Derek Bok suggested Friday.

Bok's proposal, in a letter to the faculty, was in response to the recent acceptance by some Harvard professors of what they said were individual contracts with the Central Intelligence Agency.

The letter cites two cases in which professors agreed to conceal the source of their financing or permitted the CIA to review manuscripts before publication.

The cases created a controversy on campus, and Bok convened a committee to advise him on whether Harvard's rules on sponsored research were adequate and well understood.

Bok said he feels faculty members should not be barred by the school from agreeing to prepublication reviews to ensure against disclosure of classified information, unless there is evidence that such reviews result in unjustified censorship.

"But I do feel that members should be required to disclose that fact in any book or article so reviewed and to indicate whether the review resulted in any changes in the manuscript," Bok said.

If a prepublication review is disclosed, Bok said it might be superfluous to require disclosure that the research was funded by an intelligence agency.

"Hence, I would not care particularly whether such a rule were in force, although I would feel personally bound to disclose my source of funding whenever such disclosure would be likely to interest readers," he said.

As a final point, Bok wrote, "I believe that the rules relating to sponsored research should apply equally to all research carried out by professors while on the Harvard payroll." He said the basic principles behind the rules are that professors should not accept financial support for research that cannot be revealed or agree to unjustified censorship.

Harvard does not want to police its faculty so "the standards individual faculty members set for themselves are likely to be as important as the rules the university promulgates," he said.